

The Truce of Hdaybiyah: An Open Victory

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This article discusses why the Qur'aan refers to the Truce of Hdaybiyah an "open victory."

The truce of Hdaybiyah was one of the most important milestones in Islamic history, on par with the Hijrah and the Battle of Badr. In fact Hdaybiyah was a greater victory than Badr, although this statement in no way belittles the significance of Badr. What makes Hdaybiyah unique and hence different from previous victories was that its true ramifications only became apparent later. In fact, at the time of its signing, the truce was considered by most Companions as a humiliation and not a victory. The background to this historic truce is as follows.

In the sixth year after Hijrah, following a dream from Allah, the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) decided to travel to Makkah to perform the 'Umrah. The expressed purpose of the visit was for the Muslims to fulfil their duty of performing the 'Umrah, thereby and display their respect for the sanctity of the Ka'bah. When he reached Dhu al-Hulayfah, the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) and his fifteen hundred Companions assumed their ihram and garlanded their sacrificial animals. Upon hearing that the Quraysh had deployed an army under the command of Khalid bin Walid to intercept the Muslims, the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) changed direction and camped twenty two kilometres North West of Makkah in a place called Hdaybiyah. Hdaybiyah was chosen as the place to camp, as this was the spot that the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam)'s camel sat down and refused to move. The Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said; "...the One who restrained the elephant from Makkah is keeping it (the camel) back". In others words, Allah had chosen Hdaybiyah as the place for the Muslims to camp.

The Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) sent a succession of messengers to Quraysh to inform them of his peaceful intentions, and his desire to visit the Ka'bah. However, the reaction to his messengers was not positive. The Quraysh were put in a dilemma, for a refusal to allow entry to the Ka'bah would be considered outrageous by other Arab tribes, on the other hand, allowing the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) to enter Makkah, would be seen as a political defeat for them. In addition, the Muslims had arrived unannounced and the leader of Quraysh, Abu Sufyan was not present. The Quraysh feared a forced entry to Makkah by the Muslims.

The Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) then sent 'Uthmaan, who was well respected among sections of the Quraysh, to Makkah to negotiate with them. 'Uthmaan's mission also bore no fruit. Furthermore, his delay in returning back to the camp of the Muslims led to a rumour that he had been killed. The Muslim swore a pledge unto death with the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam), known as the pledge of Ridwan, to avenge the blood of 'Uthmaan. However, fortunately for the Quraysh, 'Uthmaan returned unharmed.

The Quraysh then delegated Urwah ibn Mas'ud to speak to the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) on their behalf. Again no positive outcome came out of the meeting. On return to his people Urwah stated that although he had visited the most powerful leaders of his time; Chosroes, Caesar and Negus, he

had never seen anyone so attached to his people as Muhammad (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam), nor had he ever seen any people so devoted to their leader, as the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam)'s Companions.

The Quraysh finally sent Suhayl ibn 'Amr to negotiate a deal with the Muslims. The Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) felt optimistic when he saw Suhayl. A treaty was signed between the Quraysh and the Muslims with the following terms. First, the Muslims were to withdraw from Makkah this year without performing 'Umrah. The following year they could return unarmed, to perform 'Umrah, and to stay no more than three nights. Secondly, all hostilities between the two parties were to cease with immediate effect for a period of ten years. Third, if anyone (or any man according to Bukhaaree's text) was to leave Makkah for the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam), then the Muslims would be obliged to hand him back. However, if any Muslims were to come to the Quraysh, they would not be obliged to hand him back. Fourthly, the other Arab tribes were free to enter an alliance with either party (Quraysh or the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam)).

The treaty was discussed point by point. Prior to the discussion of the main body of the treaty, Suhayl ibn 'Amr insisted that the written treaty be headed with 'Bismika Allāhumma' and not the Basmallah. Second, 'Muhammad the Messenger of Allah' was to be erased and replaced by 'Muhammad ibn Abdullah'. To the consternation of the scribe of the treaty, 'Alee ibn Abu Talib, the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) agreed to these demands of Suhayl. While the third point; if any Muslim was to come to the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam), he would be obliged to hand him back to the Quraysh, was being discussed, Abu Jundal, son of Suhayl ibn 'Amr arrived in chains. The signs of torture were obvious on his body, and he begged the Muslims not to hand him back to his father. A heated discussion ensued between the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) and Suhayl, with the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) trying his utmost to secure the freedom of Abu Jundal. However, Suhayl insisted that he be handed back or else there would be no treaty. With a heavy heart, the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) exhorted Abu Jundal to be patient and handed him back. 'Umar could not contain himself, and argued with the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam), an action which he quickly regretted and repented for.

The Companions felt that the terms of the treaty were unfair; they had come to perform 'Umrah, yet they were prevented from doing so, their distress was further compounded by the handing over of Abu Jundal. Upon the conclusion of the treaty, the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) ordered the Companions to sacrifice their animals and shave their head, repeating the order three times. However due to their state of shock, not a single Companion moved from his place. At the suggestion of Umm Salamah, the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) sacrificed his own animal and had his head shaved, and immediately his Companions followed suit.

On the way back to Medina, Soorat al Fath was revealed: **"Verily, We have granted thee a manifest victory."** The Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said about this Soorah: 'Tonight a Soorah has been revealed to me and it is dearer to me than that on which the sun rises'. Upon hearing this, the Muslims rejoiced.

There are a number of reasons why this treaty, which on the face of it, looked like a humiliating defeat, was in fact an open victory. The situation of the Muslims prior to this treaty was precarious. The battle of Ahzāb which took place only two years prior to Hudaibiyah was clear evidence that the Quraysh and their allies were intent on completely destroying the state of Medina and with it, the

religion of Islam. The northern flank of Medina was no safer. The two Jewish tribes of Banu Qaynuqā' and Banu Nadīr having been expelled from Medina, took refuge with their Jewish allies sixty miles north of Medina, in a fortified territory called Khaybar. Khaybar was in fact the centre of Jewish power in Arabia. No doubt, the Jews wanted revenge for their expulsion from Medina as well as the killing of their brethren from Banu Qarayzah. To this end, they formed alliances with various Arabs tribes including Ghatafān intending to attack and destroy Medina. Hence the Muslims faced a military threat on both north and south sides.

The treaty of Hudaibiyah was an open victory in that it broke the three party alliance of Quraysh, the Jews and Ghatafān, who had united in their common aim of destroying Islam. The Quraysh, a bitter and powerful enemy of Islam, had now withdrawn from the arena of war. Peace with the Quraysh meant that the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) could deal with the Jews on the northern front, without any fear of the Quraysh attacking him from the south. Within days of returning to Medina, the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) set off to conquer Khaybar, a mission that was accomplished without heavy loss of life on the Muslim side. The threat from the Jews, which had so concerned the Muslims, was now removed. The fact that the Muslims of Abyssinia felt that it was safe to leave for Medina, only after the conquest of Khaybar shows how precarious the very existence of the Muslims was prior to Hudaibiyah.

One may ask, when faced with two determined enemies; the Quraysh and the Jews, why did the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) chose to make peace with the former and not the latter, especially given that the Jews were ideologically closer to the Muslims than the Quraysh. There are a number of reasons for this. The Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) did not trust the Jews. Each of the three tribes: Banu Qaynuqā', Banu Nadīr and Banu Qarayzah had broken their agreements with the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). The Jews were involved in a number of assassination attempts against the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). As for the Quraysh, the most hostile men from among them had been killed at Badr. Abu Sufyan, the new leader of Quraysh, and also the father in law of the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam), was less hostile to Islam than previous Qurayshi leaders. Also following their defeat at Ahzāb, the Quraysh had realised that the destruction of Medina was not likely. This made them more amenable to peace.

A second significant victory arising from the treaty was that for the first time, the Quraysh had recognised the existence of the Muslims, and had dealt with them on equal terms. No longer were the Muslims considered a renegade band whose leader had deserted the noble tribe of Quraysh. The Quraysh, prior to the treaty, were at the forefront of the pagan Arab hostility to the Muslims. The treaty led to a significant decline in hostility from other Arab tribes. An immediate effect of the treaty was that Banu Khuzā'ah entered into an alliance with the Muslims. Prior to Hudaibiyah, such an alliance would have incurred the wrath of the Makkans, and may have even been considered tantamount to war. Historically, Banu Khuzā'ah had always been sympathetic to the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) and his family, now they were able to show their allegiance openly. This particular alliance was to have huge ramifications two years later.

Thirdly, the period of peace gave the Muslims the opportunity to spread Islam. Al Zuhri commented that this was in fact the greatest victory for the Muslims so far. Al Zuhri went on to say: "None talked about Islam intelligently without entering it. In those two years [after the treaty] double as many entered Islam as ever before". Al Zuhri's statement is corroborated by Ibn Hisham's statement that during the conquest of Makkah, only two years after Hudaibiyah, the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) had 10,000 men with him, as compared to the

1,400 men at Hudaibiyah. As well as preaching to the Arab tribes, the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) extended his da'wah activities to the various rulers of his time. Heraclius of Rome and Chosroes of Persia were amongst the leaders who received letters from the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). Islam, from its inception, was a universal message. The treaty of Hudaibiyah, allowed the universality of Islam to take practical shape.

One aspect of the treaty, which the Muslims felt was unjust, was the fact that any Muslim fleeing Makkah to Medina would be returned back by the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). In other words, Medina was no longer host to the persecuted Muslims of Makkah. "Umar's strong disapproval of this clause has been mentioned earlier. The upset caused by this clause was far greater the disappointment at being prevented from performing the 'Umrah. This clause did not result in any Muslim women being handed back as according to Bukhaaree, the clause stated: "No man of us may come and join you."

This clause, however, was not to be in the interests of the Quraysh. Shortly after the treaty had been concluded, Abu Basir, who had escaped to Medina, was handed back by the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) to the Quraysh, as per the agreement. However, he managed to escape, and along with other Muslims, who had fled from Makkah, he started intercepting and attacking the Qurayshi trade caravans from his base in Sayf al Bahr. The Quraysh, losing both men and wealth, were forced to request that the Makkah Muslims be given refuge in Medina. Al Bayhaqi states that Abu Jandal arrived in Medina with sixty men. Hence, the most contentious element of the treaty, the one that caused immense consternation among the Companions, was now abolished. It is argued that the tactics of Abu Basir were approved by the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam)'s statement (when he said), that "he would have kindled a war, had there been others with him".

Following the treaty of Hudaibiyah, an important event occurred which led the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) to say; "Quraysh has given us its own blood" (Mubarakpuri, 1995: 348). This important event was the arrival in Medina of three of the prominent men of Quraysh; Khalid bin Walid, 'Amr bin Al-'As and 'Uthmaan bin Talhah. All three embraced Islam. Khalid, a military genius, was to later conquer Syria, and Amr was to conquer Egypt.

Finally the treaty prepared the ground for the conquest of Makkah. The treaty was broken when Banu Bakr along with some prominent men of Quraysh, attacked the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam)'s allies; Banu Khuzā'ah. This act was clearly a violation of the treaty. Initially, the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) gave the Quraysh the option to pay blood money, but they refused. However, realising their foolish mistake, Abu Sufyan was sent to Medina to renew the treaty but he returned back to Makkah without success.

The Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) dispatched an army from Medina to conquer Makkah. By the time the army had reached the outskirts of Makkah, it numbered ten thousand. Upon entering Makkah, the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) ordered his troops only to fight those who fought them, and announced a general amnesty for all Makkans bar six individuals. The 360 idols in the Ka'bah were destroyed by the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) and

Makkah was returned to the true religion of Ibrahim; to single out Allah alone for worship. The people of Quraysh accepted Islam wholeheartedly. The Arabs had been carefully watching developments between the Prophet (sall-Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) and the Quraysh. Now that the Quraysh, who were recognised as the

religious leaders of the Arabs, and the custodians of the Ka'bah, had embraced Islam, the rest of the Arabs "came forward in large numbers" to embrace Islam.

In conclusion, the truce of Hudaibiyah was an open victory. Prior to the truce, the Muslims had always been on the defensive; in fact their very existence was under threat. Now, the Muslims were recognised as a legitimate entity in their own right. The enmity of the leaders of Arabia; the Quraysh, had been neutralised, and the Jewish threat from the north, post-Hudaibiyah was eliminated. The era of peace that ensued after the truce enabled the spread of Islam to an extent never experienced before. These factors led to the historic conquest of Makkah; the spiritual and financial centre of Arabia. The conquest of Makkah in turn, led to vast numbers of Arabs embracing Islam. Soon, most of Arabia was under Muslim domination, and Muslim armies were preparing to engage with and conquer the two super powers of the time; Persia and Rome.

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